Shand Challenge Bicycle Race, Robin Howells Ride

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As they did in the early days of cycling a century ago, bicycle riders will gather Sunday, Aug. 23, near Shand House in Windsor, N.S., for a summer bike race or a ride along the scenic roads of the Annapolis Valley.

Last year, the Shand Challenge "century" race, a 162-kilometre/100-mile individual time trial, returned to Windsor after an eight-year absence. This summer, racers can once again compete in the challenge, while bike tourists can take part in a "century" recreational tour, the 100-kilometre or 100-mile Robin Howells Memorial Bike Ride. A 40-kilometre bike tour around the Windsor area is new this year.

The Shand Challenge Race and Robin Howells Memorial Bike Ride, organized through a partnership between Shand House Museum and the Centennial Cycling Club in Hantsport, revive and celebrate the tradition of bicycle racing and touring in the Annapolis Valley.

The race is named for Clifford Shand, a champion cyclist from the 1880s until the early 1900s. Mr. Shand, whose family home is now part of the Nova Scotia Museum, was a founding member of the Avonian Cycling Club in Windsor. The club's navy and scarlet uniform was a familiar sight on the roads of Windsor a century ago.

At the beginning of his cycling career, Mr. Shand rode a high-wheel bicycle, winning races and touring despite the discomfort and danger of riding the machine. By the early 1890s, Shand had moved to a pneumatic-tired safety bicycle, which looked much like today's bicycle. Mr. Shand's 100-mile record ride from Windsor to Kingston and back to Windsor in 1900 took seven hours, nine minutes.

In 1998, the roads, the quality of bicycles and the time records for a race similar to Mr. Shand's have much improved. Last year's Shand Challenge winner, David MacLeod, riding for Bicycles Plus, completed the century race in four hours, 30 minutes, 45 seconds.

The Shand Challenge 1998 is sanctioned by Bicycle Nova Scotia and is part of the time trials leading to the Best All-Rounder trophy. Canadian Cycling Association rules apply. The route takes competitors from Windsor to Auburn and back to Windsor. All racers must wear helmets. Competitors in the Shand Challenge must have a Bicycle Nova Scotia licence. One-day licences can be purchased at registration, which takes place at Shand House Museum from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m., Sunday, Aug. 23. The fee is $25 for licence-holders, or $36 for those requiring a one-day licence.

Participants in the Robin Howells Memorial Bike Ride, named for a late member of the Centennial Cycling Club, can register from 7

a.m. to 8 a.m. for the 100-mile tour and from 7 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. for the 100-kilometre tour. Registration for the 40-kilometre ride takes place from 7 a.m. to noon. The fee is $25. Riders must wear helmets. Registration also takes place at Shand House Museum.

Racers and riders will receive a route map, welcome package, and a ticket to the buffet dinner following the race and ride. Presentations will be made in different classes.

Shand House Museum will be open to the public from 1 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on race day. Visitors can sit on the replica high-wheel bike. Inside, they can view cycling memorabilia, some of Clifford Shand's cycling awards, as well as a permanent exhibit on Windsor's cycling history.

Shand House Museum, a part of the Nova Scotia Museum, was built in 1890. It was the home of only one family: Clifford Shand, his wife, Henrie, and their two children. Overlooking Lake Pisiquid and the Avon River, the building is a fine example of a late-Victorian home.

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Contact: Glenna Rehberg
Shand House Museum, Windsor
902-798-8213

Gary Spicer
Centennial Cycling Club, Hantsport
902-684-3102

Judith Shiers Milne
Nova Scotia Museum
Museum Services Division, Halifax
902-424-7398

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